



"Selig in Lust und Leid
lässt—die Liebe nur sein."

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG, act iii. (*Version of 1853*).

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HE "RING DES NIBELUNGEN" has been made the subject of so many brochures, pamphlets and articles, that it may seem presumptuous for me to attempt a new series of notes thereon. However, a work of such colossal proportions and vast trajectory can never be deemed exhausted, for, if only in certain particulars, it needs must yield a fresh lesson to everyone who studies it. It is merely in the light of individual impressions, then, aided here and there by the reflected impressions of others, that I wish these notes to be regarded. As to what I have called "reflected impressions," their source will be found in Mons. Geo. Noufflard's *Wagner d'après*

lui-même (vol. ii.), in Baron Hans von Wolzogen's *Leitfaden* (an entirely new *English* translation whereof is sadly needed), in Mr Houston S. Chamberlain's *Le Drame Wagnérien*, and finally in Mr Wm. C. Ward's four scholarly articles in Vol. II. of this journal. Of these works the two written in French more particularly treat the "Ring" as *drama*, and I therefore shall have more occasion to refer to them than to the other two; the German (the *Leitfaden*) is almost limited to a survey of the musical motives which illustrate that drama; the English (Mr Ward's series of articles) adopts an allegoric point of view, an expedient which should never be pushed too far or pursued too rigorously, though—if one substitutes for "allegoric" the term "symbolic"—it has a legitimate application to many individual factors in the poem. Allegory pure and simple could never have formed the basis of a vital work of dramatic art, but certain "symbols," such as the Ring, the Spear, &c., may be employed by a great dramatist with as much propriety and as far-reaching import as the 'musical motives' themselves by a great musician: the 'symbol,' as the '*Leitmotiv*,' is a concise and concrete expression for what it would have taken many and many a prosaic word to say, and when said in many a word, would have left the hearer wearied but untouched.

As the above may sound somewhat dogmatic, I will support my contention by quoting from a very important letter of Richard Wagner's, first made public as recently as last summer.*

Most of us know the name of August Roeckel fairly well by now. He was appointed Music-director (i.e. third in command of the orchestra &c.) at Dresden in 1843, shortly after Wagner had become one of the two Kapellmeisters at the Court-theatre, and soon became Wagner's most intimate friend; in 1848 to 1849 he took a prominent part in the movement for political reform; in May 1849, while the Dresden insurrection was at its height, he was taken prisoner and condemned to death as one of the ring-leaders: but his sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life,

* *Briefe an August Roeckel von Richard Wagner*, Breitkopf u. Härtel, 1894.

and finally he was pardoned and released from prison in 1862. The last, and by far the greater part of Roeckel's prison-life was spent at Waldheim; thither Wagner despatched to him from time to time, now a copy of one of his own art-writings, again a treatise by Feuerbach, now a poem ("Wieland the Smith" and the "Ring"), again a volume of Schopenhauer; the letters written by Wagner to Roeckel are therefore of peculiar interest, for, there being next to nothing in the way of external events for either side to chronicle, they deal almost exclusively with Wagner's most intimate thoughts on the works which they either accompany or follow. The particular letter which I am now about to cite was written on January 25th and 26th, 1854, and forms quite an essay in itself; for it occupies twenty-six pages of print, and in the manuscript would probably cover more than thirty sides of ordinary notepaper. The date is in itself significant, as it marks a period of interregnum in Wagner's mind, when the ideas derived from Feuerbach had fallen into the second plane, and a few months *before* his first acquaintance with the writings of Schopenhauer. The letter is far too long to be here translated *in extenso*, but I may state that it contains a profound discussion of "truth," "reality" (or "actuality"—"*Wirklichkeit*") and "love," in which occur the following remarkable passages: "Only that which suffers change, is real (*wirklich*): to be real, to live—means: to be begotten, to grow, to come to flower, to fade and die; without necessity of death, no possibility of life; that alone has no end, which has no beginning,—no real thing, however, is beginning-less, but solely the imagined. Thus, to ascend into the fullest truth, means to give oneself as a sentient human being to full reality: birth, growth, flower-time—fading, and passing away; to taste the sweet and bitter of all these, to will to live one's life in joy and suffering—and die. This alone, is 'ascending into truth.' . . . Nowadays when we talk of 'man' ('*Mensch*') we are so loveless and stupid as instinctively to think of the male alone. Only that union of male and female, thus only Love, begets (both physically and metaphysically) the human being."

Again: "I had reached the age of 36 [1849] before guessing the real tenour of my artistic trend (*Inhalt meines Kunstdranges*): till then, Art for me was the end and Life the means. But the discovery had come too late, and none but tragical experiences could answer the new bent of my life. . . . The supremely tragic meaning which Robespierre, for instance, has hitherto had for you, I can only conditionally accept,—nay, hardly at all. . . . Robespierre's tragedy consists strictly in the incredible pitiableness wherewith, at goal of all his strivings after power, the man stood utterly ignorant of what to set about with that power when won. He becomes tragical only because he avows this to himself, and since he fell through incapacity for making anything, for calling any beneficial thing to life. . . . I abide by my opinion that my Lohengrin (my reading of him) denotes the most profoundly tragic situation of the Present, namely the longing from out the height of spirituality to the depth of Love, the yearning to be fathomed by Feeling,—a yearning which modern actuality cannot as yet fulfil."

It will be found, in due course, that each of the above extracts bears strongly on the Ring-drama as it presented itself to its author's mind a year after private publication of the poem, and two or three weeks after the draft composition (not the full score) of the *Rheingold* was completed. Indeed Wagner's letter passes straight into a most valuable interpretation of the quadruple drama:—

"But upon this point I have sufficiently dilated in my Preface [the *Communication to my Friends*]. It only remains to indicate what I feel driven to do, from my standpoint, to bring both myself and mankind nearer to what I have recognised as the goal of Man—a goal that needs must stay forbidden to me in person, because all men forbid it to themselves as yet—without occupying myself with those means which I no longer can think of employing.* My art shall help me to this: and the artwork that I was bound to draft

* Apparently essay-writing, and such like; for Wagner's constant cry, at this epoch, is: "I want to get to work at my art, to be delivered from all this essay-writing."—W. A. E.

in this sense, is just my *Nibelungen-poem*. I almost fancy that it is less the unclearness of the poem's present version, than the standpoint so earnestly taken by yourself—but somewhat removed from my own—which is blamable for much having remained understood by you. Naturally, mistakes of the kind are only possible on the part of a reader who brings his own productive thought to supplement his reading : whereas the naïve man, albeit without any definite consciousness, more easily seizes the thing as it is. For myself my poem has the following sense alone :—

“Illustration of the Reality defined by me above.—In lieu of the words : ‘a day of gloom dawns for the Gods : but in shame shall end thy mighty race, stand'st thou not back from the Ring!’ I now let *Erda* merely say : ‘All that is—endeth : a day of gloom dawns for the Gods : thee bid I, back from the Ring!’—We must learn *to die*, and to *die* in the fullest sense of the word ; dread of the End is the fount of all lovelessness, and rises there alone where Love already pales. How came it, that this highest benefactrix of all living beings abandoned so the human race that it devised at last its every action, every plan and every institute, from naught but terror of that End? My poem shews it. It shews Nature in her naked truth, with all her innate opposites, whose infinitely varied meetings include the shock of mutual repulsion. Yet, that Alberich was repulsed by the Rhine-daughters—to them a thing quite natural—not *this* is the determinant cause of ill ; Alberich and his ring could have done the Gods no harm, had these latter not been already ripe for disaster. Where lies the seed of this ill, then? Look at the first scene between Wodan and Fricka—which leads at last to the scene in Act II. of the *Walküre*. The rigid bond that binds the pair, sprung from love's instinctive error of wishing to prolong itself beyond the inevitable change, to reciprocally insure itself,—this flying in face of the eternal novelty and change of the phenomenal world,—brings both its bond-slaves to a mutual scourge of lovelessness. The whole course of the poem thus shews the necessity of recognising the change, the diversity, the multiplicity, the eternal newness of reality and life,

and yielding place to it. Wodan soars to the tragic height of *willing* his own undoing. This is the whole lesson we have to learn from the history of mankind: to *will the inevitable*, and ourselves fulfil it (*das Nothwendige zu wollen* und selbst zu vollbringen). The creative work of this highest, self-annihilating Will is the final winning of the *fearless*, forever loving man: *Siegfried*.—That is all.—

"Moreover the power that works for evil, the real bane of [i.e. that poisons] Love, condenses itself into the *Gold* robbed from Nature and misused, the Nibelung's ring: the curse that cleaves thereto is not dispelled ere it is given again to Nature, the Gold plunged back into the Rhine. This, too, Wodan learns not to recognise until quite the close, till he has reached the terminus of his tragic course: what *Loge* repeatedly and movingly had told him at the first, the luster after power had overlooked the most; his first lesson—from Fafner's deed—was merely the potency of the curse itself; only when the ring must ruin even Siegfried, does he realise that this restoration of the robbed alone can wipe away the ill, and therefore he links the conditions of his own desired undoing to this reparation of an earliest wrong. All is *experience*. Nor is Siegfried, taken alone (the male alone), the perfect '*Mensch*': he's but the half; only with *Brünhilde*, becomes he the redeemer. *One* can not do all; it needs the plural; and the suffering, self-offering woman becomes at last the true, the open-eyed redemptrix: for Love, in truth, is 'the Eternal Womanly' itself. So much for the general, broader outlines: within themselves they hold the more specific details.—

"I cannot but think that you have understood me in this sense too: only, it seems to me, you have laid more weight on intermediate links of the great chain than is their due—as such,—as though you were seeking support from my poem for a preconceived hypothesis (*Anschaungsweise*) of *your own*. On the whole I cannot chime in with certain of your objections, against unclearness in individual relations. On the contrary, I believe I was guided by a fairly correct instinct, in shunning a too great eagerness to

explain ; for it has grown clear to my feeling, that a too manifest exposure of one's aim completely destroys its proper understanding : in the Drama—as in every other artwork—one must operate, not by expounding aims, but by displaying the instinctive [or involuntary—*Unwillkürlichen*]. It is just this, too, that distinguishes my poetic subject from the political subjects to which we now are treated almost solely. When, for instance, you fain would see more aim impressed on Wodan's appearance in 'Young Siegfried,' than I now allow him to utter, you do a very serious injury to my fully intended Instinct of the whole denouement. After his parting from Brünhilde, Wodan truly is nothing but a departed spirit : his highest aim can only be to let things *take their course*, go their own gait, no longer definitely to interfere ; for that reason, too, has he become the 'Wanderer.' Take a good look at him ! He resembles *us* to a hair ; he is the sum of the Intellect of the Present, whilst Siegfried is the Man of the Future, the man we wish, the man we will, but cannot make, and the man who must create himself through *our annihilation*. In such guise—you must allow—Wodan is most interesting to us, whereas he needs must seem undignified as a subtle intriguer ; and that's what he would be, if he gave counsels that were only *seemingly* against Siegfried but in reality for him, and above all for himself : 't were a trick worthy of our political heroes, but not of my jovial God who craves his own undoing. See him in his encounter with Siegfried in the Third Act ! Here the approach of his downfall makes him so instinctive a man at last, that—against his highest aim—the old pride leaps up once more, (and mark this well !) aroused by—jealousy anent Brünhilde ; for that has become his tenderest spot. 'Tis as if he would not brook being merely thrust aside, but wills to fall—to be conquered : yet even this is so little of a purposed plan, that his passion suddenly flames up for victory, for a victory which—as he says—could only make him still more wretched.—

" For the setting forth of aims, my feeling bade me keep within an infinitely fine-drawn measure. However, my hero is not to

give the impression of an entirely unconscious being ; in Siegfried I have rather sought to portray the completest man I could conceive, whose highest utterance of consciousness always takes the form of most immediate life and action.* How immensely high I rate this consciousness, *that wellnigh never may be spoken out*, you will gather from the scene between Siegfried and the Rhine-daughters : here we find Siegfried's knowledge infinite, for he knows the highest, that death is better than a life of dread ; he, too, knows the power of the ring, but regards it not, as he has something better to do ; he keeps it merely as a token—that he has not learnt to fear. Avow it, in presence of this human being all pomp of gods must fade ! What surprises me the most, is your question : Why, now the Rhinegold has been restored to the Rhine, do the Gods yet pass away ?—With a good performance, I believe, the naivest person will have no doubt on this head. Certainly their downfall is not achieved by counterpoints : these one might twist, explain and turn inside out, in sooth—one would only need to take a juristic politician as advocate ; but from our inmost feeling there arises to us—as to Wodan from *his* feeling—the necessity of that undoing. The thing was, to vindicate this necessity *from out the feeling* ; and this occurs quite of itself if the feeling has fully entered into the story from the very beginning, and followed the march of all its simple, natural motives : when Wodan finally speaks out that necessity, he merely puts into words what we ourselves already hold for necessary. When, at the close of *Das Rheingold*, Loge says of the Gods on their passing to Walhall : ‘to their end they are hasting, who ween them so rooted in strength,’ he surely does nothing but give expression to our own conviction ; for whoever follows this prologue with sympathy—not carping and hair-splitting, but letting each incident operate on his feeling—must wholly agree with Loge.—

“ Let me further say a word about *Brünhilde*. Her, also, you misjudge, when you call her refusal to make away the ring to

* “ Dessen höchstes Bewusstsein darin sich äussert, dass alles Bewusstsein immer nur in gegenwärtigstem Leben und Handeln sich kundgiebt.”

Wodan hard and perverse. Have you not seen how Brünhilde cut herself from Wodan and all the Gods for sake of *love*, because—where Wodan harboured plans—she simply loved? After *Siegfried* fully woke her, she has had no other knowledge saving that of Love. Now—since Siegfried sped from her—the symbol of this love is—the *ring*: when Wodan demands it of her, nothing rises to her mind but the cause of her severance from Wodan (because she dealt from Love); and only one thing knows she still, that she has renounced all godhood for love's sake. But she knows that Love is the only godlike thing: so, let Walhall's splendour go to ground, the ring—(her love—) she will not yield. I ask you: how pitifully mean and miserly were she, refused she to give up the ring because she had heard (mayhap through Siegfried) of its magic and its golden might? Is *that* what you seriously would attribute to this glorious woman?—If, however, you shudder to think of this woman's seeing in that *curled ring* the symbol of true love, you will feel precisely what I meant you to, and recognise the power of the Nibelung's-curse at its most fearful, its most tragic height: then will you fully comprehend the Necessity of the whole last drama, '*Siegfried's Tod*.' That's what we still had to witness, to fully realise the evil of the Gold. —Why does Brünhilde so speedily submit to the disguised Siegfried? [you ask]. Just because he had torn from her the *ring*, in which alone she treasured up her strength. The terror, the dæmoniacal, of the whole scene has entirely escaped you: through the flames foredoomed for Siegfried alone to pass, the fire which experience has shewn that he alone *could* pass, there strides to her—with small ado—an 'other': the ground reels beneath Brünhilde's feet, the world is out of joint; in a terrible struggle she is overpowered, she is 'forsaken by God.' Moreover it is *Siegfried*, in reality, who bids her share her couch with him—*Siegfried*, whom (unconsciously—but all the more bewilderingly), despite his mask, she—almost—recognises by his flashing eye. (You feel it, here passes something quite '*unspeakable*,' and therefore are very wrong to call me to account for it in speech!)

"Well, I've spun myself to a pretty length: and it was dread of that, that caused me to defer my letter. I was worried to think that you could have so entirely misunderstood certain points. On the other hand it grew clear to me that the completed whole alone could hope to silence every misconception: and, seized by a veritable passion to begin the musical working-out, I gave myself right gladly to it before ever writing you. The now finished composition of that difficult and weighty part, the *Rheingold*, has restored me to a greater sense of sureness, as you see. How much in the whole essence of my poetic aim is first made plain by the music, I have discovered once again: now I no longer can even look at the music-less poem. In time I think I shall be able to give you a glimpse of the composition too. For the present merely this much, that it has become a close-woven unity: the orchestra has hardly a single bar that is not evolved from the preceding motives. But that's a thing one can't converse about.

"What you write about the completion and performance of the whole, has my entire approval: you know as well as I, what it all depends on. Be sure I shall follow your advice in everything. How I am to bring about the eventual performance, is certainly a tremendous problem. Yet in due time I shall attempt it, as otherwise I could see no fitting aim in life before me. I'm tolerably sure that all the mechanical part of the thing could be accomplished: but—my performers?! That's what gives me a mighty big sigh. Of course I must stick to young people, not yet quite ruined by our operatic stage: I'll have nothing to do with so-called 'celebrities.' How I am to draw my young world to me, remains to be seen; I should like best to have my troupe around me a year long, before letting it make a public appearance; then I should have to spend every day with it, training it both as man and artist, and letting it gradually ripen for its task. Therefore in the happiest event I could not count on a first performance before the Summer of 1858. Be it as far off as it may, however, the idea of so concentrated an application to an end of my very own allures me with an obligation to continue living."

The remainder of this pregnant letter chiefly deals with generalities, from which, as more especially connected with the *Nibelungen* train of thought, I will merely select the following:—

"None of us is going to see the promised land [of Nature]: we shall all die in the wilderness. Intellect (*Geist*)—as someone has said—is a malady: 'tis incurable. In our present mode of life Nature permits abnormities alone: with the best of fortunes, we must needs be martyrs. . . . Shall I say my nerves are ruined? I cannot. I can only see that—with the evolution it has gone through—my nature's normal state is exaltation, whilst commonplace repose is its abnormal state. In fact I never feel well, save when I am 'out of myself': then I'm quite at home. . . . From my friend Herwegh I learn quite beautiful things about Nature, and she [Nature] guides me in many things and great. But if she wants to take the place of sterling life, of Love—I leave her on the left: in that I am like Brünhilde with the ring. Better to perish, even to live without enjoyment, than renounce my creed."

Before closing this preliminary chapter I must point to the strong trend of Wagner's conscious thought Schopenhauer-wards, though it was not until a few months later that he first read any of that philosopher's works—as we may see from a further sentence: "I don't know anything to send you just now; I myself have grown quite averse to book-reading," whereas with the next letter to Roeckel, written a year later, he sends him a copy of "*Die Welt &c.*," remarking that "it will supply a new and lofty topic for our further correspondence."

In the next chapter I shall quote from a still later letter, shewing in what light Wagner regarded his own drama after a close acquaintance with Schopenhauer's system of philosophy.

WM. ASHTON ELLIS.

Bafiz.

II.

"My state is like the lightning's light,—
Now it shines forth, and now 'tis gone from sight.
At times, amid the heavens I find my seat ;
At others, I am lower than my feet."

Gulistán. SADI.



ET us glance for one moment at one of the principal features in Sufiistic philosophy which, if we are to accept the mystical view of the poet's writings, throws light thereon. And avoiding, through limit of space, the subtleties of doctrine arising from this fundamental dogma, I may say that the Sufis believe that into Adam's clay and that of his race has been poured a measure of the wine of divine knowledge, the wine of love from the wine-house of the unseen world ; thus acquiring "grace of soul with grossness of body," and becoming the "bearer of the load of deposit of divine knowledge." Before the souls of men were cast into the "binding world" (existence) they rested in the "loosening world" (non-existence) and were with God. On the day of Covenant (Alast) God spake to his people, creating for them stages of service, for the acquisition of divine knowledge, and in order that they might retrace their steps to Himself. Life here has no object other than the quest of Him through the stages of the Path (Tarikat), until by travelling, by wandering, by devotion, and by worship, that transcendent height is reached where man becometh "ignorant of aught exterior to God. Nay he can reach a stage where from the glance of his eye, naught ariseth save God ; and where he mixeth like a drop with the ocean of His own essence (God)." This complete salvation, attainable by effort and austerity, is, however, possible only to the elect, to those souls who, on the Day of Covenant, confessed themselves content, "running with complete desire towards the stages of service."

This antithesis of Separation and Union, so constantly presented in Persian Poetry, figures also in Persian Romance. In "The Book of the Thousand Nights and A Night" these contrasting terms are liberally employed, but with the vital distinction that they are there used simply in connection with a lover and his earthly mistress. In Sufiistic compositions, on the other hand, they assume a larger meaning if we will so interpret it. A poet saith :—" Happy that time (before birth) when we were happy of state in non-existence (in the loosening world) ; neither the talk of Separation (from God) nor the search of Union (with God)." (The bracketed words are the expansions or elucidations of Lt.-Col. Clarke.)

And Hafiz overflows with kindred thoughts (vide Ghazals 20, 59, 77, 90, 115, 125 in McCarthy's translation).

Thus the love of the created to the Creator, and the desire of the soul to be united to the Godhead from which it is an emanation, (or as Burton in a note to his Arabian Nights defines it : "the human soul being a divinæ particula auræ, a disjoined molecule from the Great Spirit, imprisoned in a jail of flesh") are favourite themes with the more popular Persian poets.

In the case of Hafiz, we cannot escape from this fact, however one may incline to agree with Sudi, the Bosnian, or Nesselmann, the German, that the poet is occupied with material, not celestial wine and beauty. This "wine," kneaded into the clay of the Sufi, intoxicates him with the consciousness of the indestructibility of his true nature by death, yearning like the Sacred Blood oozing from the Lance at the close of *Parsifal* "in Sehnsucht nach dem verwandten Quelle." This longing of the soul, which on earth is in a state of exile, for the Supreme Good is expressed in language ardent, highly coloured, at times even voluptuous when in reality it is most spiritual. As Burton points out, the creature is the lover, and the Creator the beloved ; the creature addresses Allah from that standpoint. The prayer of Rabi'ah, a holy woman, and one of the earliest Sufis, uttered at dead of night upon the roof of her dwelling, "O my God, the noise of day is hushed, the lover is

with his beloved, but I have Thee for my lover, and I rejoice with Thee in solitude" is one of the first instances of the play of this imagery. Hafiz, emulating as it were this sensuous ardour, which is shared too by the "Song of Solomon," speaks frequently in this strain, the most striking example being one of the distiches engraved upon his tomb at Mosella: "Though I am old, embrace me closely, be it a single night; may I, made young by Thy caresses, at morn have might to rise." (Bicknell.)

It was this "God-intoxicated" condition of mind which, as Schopenhauer points out, is completely of Indian spirit and origin, and the germ of which has been traced by another writer to the Chandogya Upanishad, which led the Shaikh Husain Mansur Hallaj (A.D. 919) to incautiously exclaim: "I am the Truth (God)," thereby losing his life. Of him our poet sings:—"That friend by whom lofty became the head of the gibbet, His crime was this, that clear the mysteries of the sky he—made." Moreover, in lines which recall the well-known words of David and of Angelus Silesius, the German mystic, Hafiz speaks of himself thus:—"In the midst recall not thou the monastery and the tavern (of love for God); God is witness—Where—He is, with Him I am." (Ghazal 408. Clarke.)

Schopenhauer, then, finds Sufiism to be pessimistic. He says of it that it represents the tendency which is opposed to the optimism of Mohammedanism, just as the Tragedy of the Greeks was the necessary counterpoise to the optimism of Greek Paganism. He calls the Sufis the Gnostics of Islam, and translates a Persian word by which Sadi the poet denotes them as *Einsichtsvolle*—"full of insight." He furthermore says:—"Theism, calculated with reference to the capacity of the multitude, places the source of existence without us, as an object. All mysticism and so also Sufiism, according to the various degrees of its initiation, draws it gradually back within us, as the subject, and the adept recognises at last with wonder and delight that he is it himself. This procedure, common to all mysticism, we find not only expressed by Meister Eckhard, the father of German mysticism, in the form of

a precept for the perfect ascetic, 'that he seek not God outside himself' (Eckhard's Works, Vol. I., p. 626), but also very naïvely exhibited by Eckhard's spiritual daughter who sought him out, when she had experienced that conversion in herself, to cry out joyfully to him, 'Sir, rejoice with me, I have become God' (*loc. cit.*, p. 465). The mysticism of the Sufis also expresses itself throughout precisely in accordance with this spirit, principally as a revelling in the consciousness that one is oneself the kernel of the world and the source of all existence, to which all returns."

Did Hafiz always remain content with Sufi'ism? There is evidence enough for us to feel certain that there came a moment when his tameless, unconfined spirit chafed under its more dogmatic, intellectual, and perhaps moral restrictions, and at length escaped. But while he henceforward constantly reproaches and ridicules the Sufi-devotees around him for their hypocrisy and non-fulfilment of the precepts they prescribe to others, he still preserves a portion of the substance of his old creed, and with an astonishing independence and self-confidence rests satisfied with it. Mulana Rumi (1207-1273) said: "Out of the Koran the marrow I took, Before dogs its bones I cast." Hafiz may possibly have echoed these words with reference to his own position towards Sufi'ism. Or perhaps his opposition was directed more to the canting sinners around him than to the beautiful philosophy they had embraced. Be this as it may, he certainly continued to employ the poetic phraseology he had hitherto found sufficient for his purpose, and as his thoughts grew and enlarged, it is probable that his genius made corresponding advance, and, while preserving the old poetic metaphors and figures, was enabled to bring them to new and happy uses fitted to the expanded material. In other words, it is not unreasonable to conjecture that his finest Odes may have been written after he had discarded the habit of the Sufi. But in the absence of evidence as to the chronology of the poems this point must always remain in obscurity.

Of his pessimism, as of other phases of his thought, I would furnish a few illustrations. That side of his nature which, to use

his own expression, "the breath of angels made sad," reveals itself from time to time in words of singular force and pathos. In these moments he comments upon the worthless, illusive character of the world and the mockery of its promises. Throughout such outbursts he is free from the almost terrifying melancholy of Leopardi, but in dignity and reticence bears a certain relationship to Schopenhauer and Ed. von Hartmann. Moreover, had he studied the Preacher, to him he would have stretched forth his hand across the centuries. This deceitful world "is a hag who has been the bride of a thousand lovers"; "a bride of surpassing beauty, but one who is never bound to any one"; "a host who murders his guests." "The world," says he (Ghazal 46, McCarthy) "at the same time old and lovely, never yet contained compassion in her nature; what dost thou hope from her affection; why dost thou ask from her the assuagement of your longing?" "Whoever has abandoned the treasure of contentment for the treasure of the world has sold for a very small sum the Egyptian Joseph" (Ghazal 6, McCarthy). And note the following poignant utterance of hyper-sensitiveness and pain: "The whole world is dearly bought by a single moment spent in sorrow."

In vivid contrast with these tragic thoughts, others are easily culled which evince a more cheerful frame of mind, but which are not at all necessarily destructive of those just quoted. His optimism, or, more correctly, his belief in final well-being and restitution, breathe through the following examples which might without difficulty be multiplied:—"An angel from Heaven hath brought me a message, 'No one on earth will be unhappy for ever'" (Ghazal 5, McCarthy). "One day, O Hafiz, thou wilt attain to the delights of fulfilment, if thou fade not away meanwhile in the weariness of waiting" (Ghazal 87, McCarthy). And in the words alighted upon at random, when his friends and enemies quarrelled over his dead body as to the mode of his burial, and which decided the question: "Turn not away from the bier of Hafiz, for though steeped in sin, he may yet be welcomed in Heaven" (Ghazal 71, McCarthy).

Periods of religious doubt and perplexity come to him unbidden. The Agnosticism of 'Umar-i-Khayyam, as revealed in Edward Fitzgerald's beautiful paraphrase (for translation it cannot strictly speaking be called) is not more insistent than is that of Hafiz, although, with the poet of Shiraz, it forms no chronic habit of mind, and thus soon passes. Accepting Mr McCarthy's version as accurately representing the original, we find him crying out: "What do the silent heavens reveal of the secret behind the veil? O arguer, wherefore strive with the keeper of the veil?" (Ghazal 53). "I have no repose in study or solitude. Where can the learned man find the science of certainty?" (Ghazal 82). "Unloose the cords of thine heart, and consider not the sky's secret; for the thought of no geometrician hath ever untied that knot" (Ghazal 135.) At other times the angel of resignation touches him with healing hands: "Be content with what thou hast received, and smooth thy frowning forehead, for the door of choice is not open either to thee or to me. Wisdom whispered yesterday in the ear of my mind, 'Go, and in thy frailty retain still thy endurance! Still make patience thy chief purpose; in sickness and grief and want, always be patient!' Come, Hafiz, take this advice to thy soul, and if thou stagger on thy feet, lift up thine head and stand upright once more!" (Ghazal 80, McCarthy). Purest religious aspiration soars upward in thoughts such as are found in the beautiful 97th Ghazal (McCarthy) and in the sublime prayers of which the 85th and the 115th Ghazals consist; the original spirit of these rhapsodies we prefer to think has not been entirely lost, and another substituted for it, in the process of transference to our tongue. For his own back-sliding, his lapses from the Path (Tarikat), whether they may have taken the form of material wine-drinking to excess, or diversions with the "illusory beloved ones,"—for these divergences from his own higher life he has ready the scourge. Ghazal 66 (McCarthy) fills us with commiseration for the pilgrim who has lost touch with his Friend, the "true Beloved."

At other moments, as we have already said, he pours con-

tempt upon the professional teachers and lip-adherents of religion who surround him, and, as is not infrequent with the more popular Persian Poets, contrasts the profligate with the ascetic to the disadvantage of the latter. At these times he twits his brother with his woollen robe, blue in colour to denote the celestial aspirations of its wearer, urging him to sell it for a cup of wine which will drive from his face its sallow hue. Why do these brazen-faced preachers practise so little of what they preach? "Wherefore do those who order penance seldom perform penance themselves?" "Hafiz," he cries, "cast aside thy woollen garment of hypocrisy, for we follow the path of the caravan with the fire of our sighs." Striking an attitude of insolent rebellion, he hugs himself with the sense of his superb genius with its necessities of liberty, and, when he ridicules the Sufi, apparently goes the length of seeking to silence the internal monitor within him with reflections which are half truths, excuses which are plausible sophistries.* Yet in these palliatives to his conscience he shows a remarkable intellectual ingenuity; and when he expresses the view that every one, whether he is self-denying or self-indulgent, is seeking after the Beloved, he gives voice to an idea which not only forms an integral element of Sufi'ism,† but which few men, however opposed they may be to the Oriental point of view, would deny contains a modicum of truth.

Sentiments Epicurean and Stoical sometimes flow from his pen during intervals of heart- and mind-disturbance. For Love, the "principle of Creation," he has many eloquent words. He urges us to be steadfast in the Path of Love, for if we so comport

* I have said "apparently goes the length," for we must take into account the fact that if we are to read between the lines—that is, use the key of interlinear Sufi'ism—the term "profligate" should be considered in its reverse sense.

† Jelâl ed Deen er Roomee, the author of the text-book of the Order of the Mevleves, remarks in one of his verses, "Perhaps, we say, there is a path which leads elsewhere, and yet, let our pathway be whatever it will, it invariably leads to Thee." And one of the most mystical and latitudinarian of Sufi'istic doctrines is that there does not really exist any difference between good and evil, for all is reduced to unity; God being the real author of the acts of mankind.

ourselves, not only shall we spend many happy moments, but no work done therein goes without recompense. "Bow thyself down in adoration, O Angel, at the door of the Tavern of Love, for therein is kneaded the clay from which mankind hath been moulded" (Ghazal 118). And amongst the finest of his couplets is the following:—"When surpassing beauty hath annihilated a world of lovers, a fresh world springeth up to love from the Invisible" (Ghazal 118).

Amongst his wise sayings are these:—"Take matters upon thyself lightly, for it is the way of the world to lay burthens on him who is ready to do hard work" (Ghazal 58). "Not every one who brightens the face knows conquest of hearts. Not every one who reads books has the knowledge of Alexandria" (Ghazal 70). "Waste not thy life in such wise in this world that when thou art dead, men shall say naught but—'Dead!'" (Ghazal 2). "The mad heart does not come back by chains. Bring a noose from the curling lock of the beloved" (Ghazal 88). "Harm no one; otherwise do all thou wilt. My statutes recognise no other guilt" (Bicknell, p. 91).

And I cannot leave this division of my subject without quoting two distiches which possess a curious relationship to incidents in "Parsifal" and "Die Walküre." The first suggests the scene in the second act of "Parsifal" where "der reine Thor" is surrounded by Klingsor's Flower-maidens. "If a hundred armies of beauties should lie in ambush to attack my heart, I have by the mercy of Heaven an idol which will shatter their armies" (Ghazal 42). The second recalls that moment in the second act of "Die Walküre" when Siegmund, learning that Sieglinde will not accompany him to Walhall, refuses to follow Brünnhilde who has announced to him his death. "Were I to want the beloved in this world, what should I care for Paradise and its changeless maidens?" (Ghazal 28).

So far I have dealt almost exclusively with the higher life of the poet; let us look for a few moments at the opposite and lower side of his activity, if the one can be completely disentangled from

the other. There are a few poems in this Divan which, if we are to preserve our critical commonsense, are obviously bacchanalian and amatory, and which we cannot seriously regard as likely to have been conceived in a symbolical sense. In these songs he chants the praises of Love and Wine with the joys and even the pangs they bring with them, not in ambiguous words, capable of another interpretation, but in terms which leave no doubt that he was not indifferent to the ordinary pleasures of life. He who extolled them had surely tasted their sweets. There are translators and critics who extract even from these transparently Anacreontic songs a psalmody of religious devotion. To me it appears more likely that they were inspired by the first promptings of youthful passion; and that it was not before the poet had reached more mature years and had gained a higher point of view, that his genius enabled him so to deal with the same themes and phraseology as to endow the greatest of his Ghazals with that clear and radiant spiritual meaning which shines throughout them. Yet, if we are tempted to draw sweeping conclusions from such lines as: "We discharge all our duties, and do wrong to no man; and whatever we are told is unlawful, we say not that it is lawful. Of what importance is it that thou and I should drain a few cups of wine? Wine is the blood of the vine; it is not the blood of men! This is not a sin which throweth all into confusion; and were it a sin, where is the man who is guiltless of sins?" "Again the wine has stolen from me my self-possession; again the wine has conquered me by its caresses." "Perhaps the cup-bearer hath bestowed on Hafiz more than his share, for the tassel of his turban is disordered." "Desire not more than sufficeth thee, and bear thy burthen easily; for a cup of crimson wine and a woman bright as the moon are enough"—if, I say, we are tempted to draw from these extracts sweeping conclusions as to the drift of the entire Divan, we are brought to a stand when we observe the exalted use which the poet makes of the same materials in such passages as the following:—"Intoxicated with 'Unity' from the cup of 'Eternity' will all be who drink pure wine like Hafiz" (Ghazal 2).

"Hafiz thirsteth for a cup of wine; fly hence, O Zephyr, and from the slave present respects to the Master" (Ghazal 49). "He whose soul by love is quickened never can to death be hurled; written is my life immortal in the records of the world" (Bicknell). "The framework of this mortal form may rot within the mould; but in my soul a love exists which never shall grow cold" (Bicknell). "I was amazed when I discovered last night cup and jug beside Hafiz; but I said no word, for he used them in Sufi manner" (Ghazal 101). "In my coffin put up the cup; so that on the morning of rising I may, with wine, take from my heart the terror of the day, up-rising and springing" (Clarke). "O Saki, give me that imperial bowl which opes the heart, exhilarates the soul. By 'bowl,' I image the eternal wine. By 'wine,' I signify a trance divine." (From the Sakinama of Hafiz. Bicknell.) "The meaning of the goblet is—'the wine of perpetuality'; Our meaning of this wine is—'Selflessness'" (*ibid.* Clarke).

If these are material things whose praises are here sung, "who hath ever beheld earthly forms so like unto spirit"?

The problem which fronts us in a study of Hafiz—that traditionally difficult subject, as it has been called—is one which may not solve itself in the manner some persons would expect. It is very easy to affirm, (a) that these poems, taken *en bloc*, speak of nothing but sensuous and external things, or (b) that the poet occupied himself solely with the play, the change and interchange of ideas for the sake of their intrinsic beauty, their essential poetic value, and for nothing else. Nor is it difficult after a little persevering hard work to decide on the other hand, that he is throughout a theologian, and that every poem, if sifted to the bottom, is a sermon upon recondite dogmas of the Sufi faith. This is the interpretation of Lieut. Col. Clarke, and, to a large extent, also that of Bicknell; for although these authorities do admit in general terms that some of the Ghazals should be read in an obvious sense, yet when their notes to these self-same poems are consulted, we find the bias of interlinear Sufism once more rising to the surface—a theory which Clarke is inclined to ride to

death. For my part,—and in expressing this view I do so diffidently, hardly caring to measure myself with profound Oriental scholars—if I were to sum up my own conclusions, I should say that, regarded strictly from the scientific point of view, the majority of these poems is distinctly mystical, but that a minority, and a minority greater in volume than would be estimated by Clarke and others, is quite as certainly obvious and transparent; that at one moment the poet uses his favourite images with a transcendental purpose, at the next, employing the same materials, extolling the same delights, in their actual body and shape. Here they mean one thing; there, another. To us of the West it would appear that Hafiz delights in mystification; delights to play with the reader; to tantalize him; to come very close, and then suddenly to remove himself, like the Rhine-daughters with Alberich. Yet even through the drinking and erotic songs may there not perhaps be faintly traceable, on close examination, the thread of a delicate, almost impalpable Sufi'ism? For with that pantheistic philosophy God is immanent, is present everywhere and in everything; while a poet so personal and inspired as Hafiz, might well seek to imbue the actual drinking of wine with a character approaching to worship. If this contention is correct, then it follows that this fraction of the poems cannot be regarded as the apotheosis of gross and sensual pleasures. Moreover, wine, taken in strict moderation, we know to be a wondrous elixir, heightening the play of the intellectual faculties, stimulating the imagination, and while it naturally exposes no side of the drinker which does not already form a part of him, it often reveals him in his organic entirety at his best, brightest and happiest. With a poet of great mental gifts, these effects are frequently observable in a considerably increased ratio, kindling his creative impulses to a high point. What is more likely, too, than that an Oriental, a Mohammedan, a Sufi, to whom wine is rigorously denied, should be more attracted to the forbidden thing on that very score, especially in the case of Hafiz, in whom the spirit of protest and rebellion, an amazing self-confidence and self-sufficiency manifested

themselves? In this connection, may not the lines which Edward Fitzgerald wrote of 'Umar-i-Khayyam apply also to our poet? "Other readers may be content to believe with me that, while the wine 'Umar celebrates is simply the juice of the grape, he bragged more than he drank of it, in very defiance perhaps of that spiritual wine which left its votaries sunk in hypocrisy or disgust."

The main features in the character of Mohammedan Persians must never be lost sight of:—their quietism, their large powers of abstraction, their vague yet vast thoughts, their boundless and glowing imagination, their freedom from logic, their incurable love of symbology, the dangerous latitudinarianism of many of their doctrines, their lubricity, their mysticism, their tendency to lying (which, after all, is simply a degraded development of the exercise of the imagination). They keep themselves free, joyous, resigned. With them, the decrees of destiny are accepted, generally without question, and even with a certain serenity. An engaging carelessness pervades, in the main, their thought, their lives, their poetry. Many of these idiosyncrasies brought about by their racial blood and their climate are perhaps assisted into life, in the case of the Sufis, by their happy pantheism, by the belief that nothing exists absolutely but God, that all spirit is homogeneous, that the spirit of God is in *kind* the same as that of man although differing from it infinitely in *degree*, and that, confined here on earth in a cage of flesh, the soul will return after death to the bosom of God. Thus, drawing perpetual nourishment from an inward felicity, the soul attains at length the highest self-consciousness where, dilated to large proportions, it longs to be lost in God, to die in God. Such a dreamy, exalted, intoxicated frame of mind would naturally produce a rapturous poetry, offering a marked contrast to the purer, more intellectual literature of Christianity, yet concerned mostly with the eternal and the absolute, and expressed by means of symbolic structures which are employed either approximately or arbitrarily, or extravagantly, as the case may be, but which are never devoid of a

wild, and sometimes an exquisite beauty. As Freiligrath wrote of Hafiz :—

“Der Taumelmohn des Ostens schäumet
“In deines Liedes gold'nem Becher.”

M. Ubicini, who is no more favourably disposed to the theological claims of Christianity than to those of Eastern religions, finds these “mystical reveries so full of seduction” to be “a snare laid for the inclinations of the most unsuspecting and the most noble of our nature.” But Sir Richard Burton, a greater authority, calls Sufiism a “creed the most poetical and impractical, the most spiritual and the most transcendental ever invented; satisfying all man’s hunger for belief which, if placed upon a solid basis of fact and proof, would forthright cease to be belief.” (The Thousand Nights and a Night, Ed. 1894. Vol. viii., p. 117.) Max Müller thinks (in “Deutsche Liebe”) that the Persians are not entirely deceived in their Hafiz. And Hegel, in his “*Æsthetik*,” observes of his poems that therein “the spiritual cannot disengage itself from the sensuous”; a synthesis which would naturally interest that philosopher who sought to identify knowing and being, to unite the thought with its contradiction—the position and its negation. “The spiritual cannot disengage itself from the sensuous!” How true of this poetry! Hegel anticipates Fitzgerald, who, in the preface to his translation of ‘Umar-i-Khayyam, discovers the Persian people to be “as quick of bodily sense as of intellectual; and delighting in a cloudy composition of both, in which they could float luxuriously between heaven and earth, and this world and the next, on the wings of a poetical expression, that might serve indifferently for either.”

So we return to Goethe who in the verse which I quoted in the former essay found in Hafiz a marriage between the world and the Spirit. Sadi, the Persian poet, in those lines from “*Gulistán*” full of that sense of the duality of things which characterises much of the Persian poetry, says :—

“He who in pride would blame me because I drink and love,
“Despises those whose spirits ascend to things above,

"My state is like the lightning's light ;
"Now it shines forth, and now 'tis gone from sight ;
"At times, amid the heavens I find my seat ;
"At others, I am lower than my feet."

Apply these words to Hafiz, and we have the real gist of the matter.

Thus, inspired by a fantasy which is largely irresponsible and unconscious, like that which animates the song of the nightingale Hafiz never tires of celebrating, these nebulous poems stand nearer perhaps to the heart and understanding of Orientals than to our own.

A temptation to discuss the numerous translations must be resisted at this moment, and postponed to some future occasion. I will only say that the translation I have used for the majority of my selections is that of Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy ; and I chose it, not because I necessarily think it the most satisfactory and independent, but because it was the first that came into my hands and from which I made my classification. Since then, however, I have alighted amongst many others upon a version from the pen of the late S. Robinson, and published by Williams & Norgate in 1873 ; a volume to which Mr. McCarthy would be the first to acknowledge his indebtedness.

One point now remains for consideration. What did Wagner intend to imply, when in those letters to Uhlig and to Roeckel he called Hafiz "the greatest and most sublime philosopher"—"the greatest poet that ever lived and wrote"—adding the words : "Something similar to this will also be shown in my own 'Nibelungen,'" &c. The letters in which these passages occur were written, as I have said, before Wagner opened the pages of Schopenhauer, and at a moment too, when the influence of Feuerbach's writings, whatever it may at one time have been, no longer played an *active* share in his thought. Perhaps, then, his mind was in a condition peculiarly receptive to any fresh impression. But to call Hafiz "the greatest philosopher" was very enthusiastic ; strictly speaking, he cannot, of course, be called a philos-

opher at all, if we are to regard him as classed in the category which includes Plato, Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer. As a poet pure and simple, his claims are high and incontestable; this fact is made evident by a superficial reading of any of the translations—translations which have constantly multiplied themselves for the last five centuries, and which will probably continue to increase for many centuries to come. Yet to elevate Hafiz to the greatest of poets!—And “something similar to this will also be shown in my own ‘Nibelungen’”!—I am bound to express the opinion that no comparison between the “Nibelungen” and the “Divan” can properly be instituted. To affirm that both works are symbolic, that the Latin motto “*Omnia vincit Amor*,” or the words from Faust—“*Gefühl ist Alles*”—can be super-scribed to each, throws no light upon the point. Assuming that Wagner took the mystical view of Hafiz, did he mean that in both his own and the Persian’s work the external is counted as dross, and that all that is valuable is to be found only in the internal realities, in the purest love, sacrifice and resignation? Did he mean that as religions are matters of indifference with the Sufi, who regards them as serving simply as a means of reaching the actual, so in his own “Nibelungen,” though gods may perish, the ideal content of Religion itself lives for ever in the heart and consciousness of man?

CHARLES DOWDESWELL.

Notes on ‘Oper und Drama’: 333.



HE last two numbers of this journal have contained a translation of an article attributed to W. H. Riehl. Although its line of thought is by no means that of Richard Wagner, the article on “Modern Opera” is both interesting and instructive, for various reasons. First, as stated in No. xxix., it originally appeared (1850) in a magazine

which may be called the "Nineteenth Century" of that day, and it may therefore be taken as a type of the better sort of criticism at the time when Wagner wrote his *Oper und Drama* and thereby opened people's eyes a little. Secondly, it throws a side-light on the political condition of the era, through its numerous references to "revolutions and uprisings," and helps to account for the large part played by social and semi-political questions in Wagner's own volume: everyone at that time was in a state of mental ferment, anxiously expecting, or nervously dreading a regeneration, or at least a complete upheaval, of Society and State—a prospect all the more attractive, to many, through its utter vagueness and infinitude of possibilities. A third point of interest will be found in its fairly exhaustive survey of the various degrees of vogue and popularity enjoyed at the time by almost all the operatic composers whose names are still familiar to us, though the works of many of them are scarcely ever heard to-day, at least in England; we have here a kind of final roll-call of the Opera, preparatory to the great Wagnerian battle. Fourthly—and this was my principal reason for ferreting out and translating the article—the interest of Part I. of *Oper und Drama* is doubled after one has carefully studied this its instigator, as in some respects we may style it; many of Wagner's sarcasms and richly humorous allusions, in that work, require this antecedent alkali, to make their acid duly effervesce. From this point of view, moreover, one now can see precisely what Wagner is tilting at, when he speaks of "characteristique," "the national," "neoromanticism" &c.. And finally we have here a contribution to the psychology of the Bayreuth master himself, as the following paragraph will explain.

Some two years ago, in a paper read before the Musical Association, I ventured to assert that the mind of Richard Wagner was one of the most impressionable that can possibly be conceived: true artist that he was, in a moment he gets *en rapport* with his subject, catches the tone of those with whom he is arguing or conversing, and replies in kind; yet with him this is but an external trait, for below the form we always see the true Wagnerian sub-

stance, following its own broad lines of evolution to an ever deeper, grander grasp of things. This article of Riehl's affords a striking proof of that assertion : compare it with the first hundred pages of *Oper und Drama* and you will find a palpable outward similarity of style, but just as marked an inner variance, the variance between the mind of genius and the mind of average talent. A trick or two of phrase and composition has momentarily passed from Riehl's to Wagner's pen : but observe how the former author sails round and round his point, always missing it just when one would have thought it past all possibility of avoiding ; how he sets up his ninepins time and again, only to bowl them over, and finally leaves the field bestrewn with wooden corpses, but never a living principle erect. Then turn to Wagner : see how he starts with one great vital principle, that *Drama* has not been, but henceforth must be, the aim and end of Opera ; and how he develops it, in wider and wider circles, from the first to the last line of *Oper und Drama*. It is the difference between the worthy and ambitious, but somewhat philistine Journalist, and the Artist who takes his pen in hand to demolish all this barren chatter and lay bare the inner springs of Art.

Should Wagner's *critical* powers still be questioned, his criticism of this very critic would be convincing evidence enough. Open OPERA AND DRAMA at page 15, and read : " He gets as far as the well-grounded doubt whether Opera is not after all a quite self-contradictory, unnatural genre of art ; he shews in the works of *Meyerbeer*—here, to be sure, almost unconsciously—this Un-nature driven to its most vicious pitch ; and—instead of speaking roundly out the needful thing, already almost on the tongue of everyone—he suddenly veers round, to keep for Criticism an everlasting life, and heaves a sigh that *Mendelssohn's* too early death should have hindered, i.e. staved off, the solution of the riddle ! . . . Was Mozart a lesser musician ? Is it possible to find anything more perfect than every piece of his *Don Juan* ? But what could Mendelssohn, in the happiest event, have done beyond the delivering, number for number, of pieces that should equal Mozart's in their perfectness ? Or does our critic wish for something other,

something more, than Mozart ever made?—There we have it: he demands the great one-centred fabric of the Drama's whole; he demands—between his lines—the Drama in its highest fill and potency. But to whom does he address the claim?—*To the Musician!*" Again, page 36: "Whosoever insists on seeing in Mozart an experimenting musician who turns, forsooth, from one attempt to solve the operatic problem to the next, can only counterpoise this error by placing alongside of it another, and, for instance, ascribing naïvety to Mendelssohn when, mistrustful of his own powers, he took his cautious, hesitating steps along that endless stretch of road which lay between himself and Opera.—Both things are done by the author of the article on 'Modern Opera.'"

Properly to appreciate Part I. of *Oper und Drama*, it should be read straight through immediately after a reading of Riehl's article. But just to shew Wagner's general opinion of this halting, pseudo-scientific criticism, I may quote two little gems of irony: "The Musician was bound to fulfil his destiny of presenting German Criticism—for whom it is well-known that God's all-caring providence created Art—with the joy of an 'Historic music.' . . . When all the world goes crazy, the Germans are in their seventh heaven; for they have so much the more to ponder, to unravel, to expound, and finally—so as to make themselves *quite* comfortable—to classify!" (Pages 65 and 57, Eng.)

Having attributed the article to W. H. Riehl, I must now say that I have the authority of the publishers of the *Gegenwart* for that supposition; also I must tell you who he was. Born at Biebrich in the year 1823, at the age of 21 he became editor of a newspaper, and remained in the ranks of Journalism for many years. In 1851 he was attached to the staff of the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung*; in '53 King Maximilian II. made him a professor at the Munich University; in '62 he became a member of the Munich Academy, and in '85 was appointed to the important post of Director of the Bavarian National Museum and General Conservator of Art-monuments &c. To him the Germans owe a number of books, some of them novels, some of them æsthetic

treatises, and some combining the disadvantages of both classes. In 1867 he wrote a volume of short tales, his "*Neues Novellenbuch*," which called forth an adverse critique from Wagner; this critique was reprinted in *Ges. Schr.* vol. viii., and its first half has just appeared in the serial Part 4 of the "Prose Works" Vol. iv. Twice over, then, was Riehl distinguished by the literary notice, hostile 'tis true, of Richard Wagner. Yet we must not connect the second attack with the first, for Riehl was but little known when he wrote the (anonymous) article on "Modern Opera," and the article itself seems to have completely passed from Wagner's memory even so soon as a year after his reply thereto; for we find him writing to Uhlig on December 18th, 1851: "How, where, and what is this about the 'Critic of the Gegenwart,' of whom you write me? I know absolutely nothing about it"; and again in the next letter but one, Jan. 1st, 1852: "You keep on writing me about 'the' Critic of the Gegenwart: but I don't in the least know *what* you mean; I have read nothing about him (or "of his"). Where can I find anything?"—A word of explanation is needed. In writings of this period Wagner constantly talks of the "Artist of the Present"—"*der Künstler der Gegenwart*"; therefore when Uhlig refers to "the Critic of the Gegenwart," Wagner evidently deems it an allusion to some reviewer whom Uhlig thought of sufficient importance to merit the title "*the critic of the present day*"; he has completely forgotten the concrete "Gegenwart," the paper of that name. I therefore consider it unlikely that he should ever have taken the trouble to find out the name of the article's author; hence, so far as concerns the first, his second passage of arms with Riehl was a mere coincidence, Riehl having given him plenty of ground for hostility through his persistent opposition to Wagner's plans at Munich. But this confusion of the concrete with the abstract "Gegenwart" is instructive from another point of view: it shews how little Richard Wagner cared for what I may call looking at himself in the literary looking-glass; for he had received his first complete copy of *Oper und Drama* from the publishers just three weeks

before he wrote to ask Uhlig what on earth he meant by "the critic of the Gegenwart," and as the Introduction to that book consists mainly of a criticism of the said critic, it is obvious that Wagner can scarcely have had even the curiosity to see how his book turned out when read as a connected whole. This reminds one forcibly of his remark in 1871: "when I laid one silent score on the top of the other, never to dip into its leaves again . . . I couldn't but burst out laughing at myself and the 'stupid stuff' I was grinding out down there" (PROSE WORKS, vol. iii., p. 267). With the impatience characteristic of the true creative genius, he could never look behind him on his march until he reached one of those halting-places where it became necessary to review the past in preparation for the future. To this trait we may attribute the frequent expressions, to be found in his private correspondence, of almost disgust at his earlier efforts, followed, often at a considerably later date, by a more just appreciation of their intrinsic value. Further, this impetuous rushing forward, succeeded by intervals of deliberate meditation, not only marks the abnormal conjunction in his nature of the qualities of both artist and philosopher, but accounts for what the superficial have often pointed to as inconsistency in his opinions. Only by taking a higher standpoint and a broader view, is it possible to judge the utterances of such an exceptional mind.

W. A. E.

NOTES.

On June 6th Herr Siegfried Wagner, for a second time, conducted one of the admirable concerts organised by Mr. A. Schulz-Curtius at the Queen's Hall, London. It was to be expected that his reading of the *tempi* for the two middle movements of Beethoven's Eighth Symphony would meet with opposition in certain quarters perennially rooted to tradition, especially as attention had been drawn to the fact of Richard Wagner's having advocated such a reading. To the best of our recollection, however, the *tempi* adopted by Herr Siegfried in that Symphony did not materially differ from Dr Hans Richter's reading; at any rate, we can personally testify to Dr Richter's approval. The latter remark applies also to Herr Siegfried's rendering of the "Freischütz" overture—in which Dr Richter merely suggested one or two improvements in detail—though we do not remember to have ever heard the Viennese chief conduct that overture himself, and therefore cannot institute comparisons. Some reporters have expressed disappointment with Herr Siegfried Wagner's second appearance (the first occurred in November of last year); but, it seems to us, they must have been blind to the obvious fact that physically he was not at all well on June 6th; also, they evidently overlooked the very natural nervousness of a young conductor upon presenting to the world his maiden effort in composition. As to the latter, opinions have differed, but very few persons have failed to recognise the breadth and beauty of the "Wunderland" theme that occurs towards the close of "Sehnsucht"; though it is somewhat strange to find that theme referred to as a "chorale," in view of its marked kinship, in *idea* at least, to Richard Wagner's Walhall motif. In our opinion, Siegfried Wagner gives every promise of some day becoming a very fine and inventive composer. With a young man who personally displays

such marked individuality, the period of musical leading-strings must soon make way for that of thorough independence. —The night before the concert, the members of our Society had the pleasure of entertaining Herr Siegfried at a *Conversazione*, given in the picture-galleries of the Messrs Dowdeswell, New Bond Street.

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What is the use of announcing a performance of *Tannhäuser* "as at Bayreuth and Paris," and giving a hybrid show that certainly is totally unlike anything we have seen at Bayreuth, and surely cannot resemble the recent Paris revival? Public commendation has been bestowed on the fact that the "Overture was retained in its original form." Is that like Bayreuth? In the first place, it still further lengthens an Act which Wagner had already made longer than in the earlier version; in the second, Wagner's reason for cutting down the overture was precise and obvious—it formerly gave one the *whole* drama in tone, and therefore was only fit for the concert-room; thirdly, the abrupt transition from the Pilgrims' Chant to the revels of the Venusberg was always inartistic. This, however, at Covent Garden was obviated by the scene in Venus' court resembling nothing so much as a village school-feast, presided over by three pupil-teachers, whilst one could find no earthly excuse for the walking Cupids wanting to shoot the well-behaved young ladies. Again, is it like Bayreuth for Mons. Alvarez to attire himself in the Second Act *à la* Lohengrin—in virginal, or wedding white—and throughout to be so afraid of spoiling his pretty clothes, that not once did he bite the dust in agony of remorse or ecstasy of adoration? Finally: if anywhere in the world a sufficient body of young and pure-toned voices could be got together, it was in this metropolis; why, then, were we deprived of that marvellous "Heil"-chorus at the opera's close?